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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 10 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

Over the last week the Palestinian Observer delegate has bombarded you with a flurry of letters dated 1, 2 and 9 April 1997, about the situation in the territories. I am reluctant to engage in a "war of letters", because the place for meaningful exchanges between Israel and the Palestinians is at the negotiating table - and not your post-box.

Hence, I will make only a few observations.

Like Mr. Ramlawi's first letter in the series (of 26 March), all his subsequent ones are purposely distorted and disingenuous. For example, when he claims that the Palestinians are simply expressing their indignation at Israeli decisions "through peaceful means" (rioting, stoning, Molotov cocktails, etc.), he is giving new meaning to the phrase (in a letter appropriately dated 1 April).

When, in the same letter, he suggests that the building of a housing project in Jerusalem threatens the "peace and security of mankind", Mr. Ramlawi is exaggerating somewhat. But when he claims that international

law has established a "list of acts of aggression and crimes against the peace and security of mankind", his skills as an international lawyer can be seen to be seriously wanting.

Then, Mr. Ramlawi would be perhaps advised to re-examine the "Madrid principles" as set out in the letter of invitation to the Middle East Peace Conference (Madrid, October 1991) before he expatiates on them (his letter of 2 April).

Finally, if he thinks that he can delude members of the Commission on Human Rights into believing that Israeli civilians in Hebron simply open fire on Palestinians without extreme provocation (for example, after being attacked with chemical acid spray), and not in self-defence, then he is surely overestimating the credulity of members.

It is undeniable that the Middle East Peace Process is currently going through a difficult, if not critical, phase. But it is not the case that it has been destroyed - certainly not by Israel. Serious proposals are on the table, talks at the highest level continue, especially in Washington - and in witness thereof, two senior Palestinian representatives are meeting with the United States Secretary of State today.

What is needed now is for the Palestinians to drop their automatic resort to terror and violence every time they disagree with something in the negotiating process. Suicide bombers in Tel Aviv and outside Jewish settlements (covered by the Oslo Agreements) in the Gaza Strip are peace-breakers - not peace-makers.

Hence, what is urgently required is for the Palestinian leadership to convincingly take charge of the situation, to put an end to the terror and violence, to apprehend the perpetrators - and, above all, to return to the negotiating table.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for this letter to be distributed, as a matter of urgency, under item 10 of the agenda.

(signed) Yosef LAMDAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative